SYSTEM AND METHOD OF MODIFYING MENU DATA FOR SELF-SERVICE COMPUTERS

BACKGROUND

[0001] Self-service computer systems have replaced assisted-service computer systems in many business environments today. For example, self-service computer systems may be found in banking, retail, hospitality, travel, entertainment, medical, and other environments.

[0002] In some environments, self-service computers display menus containing choices for user selection. For example, quick service restaurants may have self-service computers that allow customers to select food items from a menu and pay for those food items.

[0003] Menu creation may be centrally managed. For example, in quick service restaurant companies that manage thousands of restaurants, central menu management teams manage and control menus for individual restaurants. The central menu management teams generate a small number of menus and send them to the individual restaurants.

[0004] In most instances, menus contain all menu items for all restaurants. Since individual restaurants sell some but not all items in the menus, assisted service restaurant personnel are taught to only accept orders for items sold in their restaurants. Thus, trained personnel avoid ordering of items not sold in their restaurants. This practice reduces the time and cost for central menu management teams by allowing them to avoid creating custom menus for each restaurant.

[0005] However, this practice of distributing menus containing all items sold by all restaurants is suited for an assisted-service environment with clerk controlled point of sale terminals, not a self-service environment with self-service kiosks. Customers cannot be taught to avoid ordering unavailable or inactive food items.

[0006] Therefore, it would be desirable to provide a system and method of modifying menu data for self-service computers.

SUMMARY

[0007] A system and method of modifying menu data for self-service computers is provided.

[0008] The system includes a computer for receiving menu data from a host computer, for modifying the menu data to exclude items unavailable for sale at a location, and for making modified menu data available for use by self-service computers at the location.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 illustrates a block diagram of a first example system including menu data.

[0010] FIG. 2 illustrates a block diagram of a second example system including menu data.

[0011] FIG. 3 illustrates an example screen showing menu modification.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0012] Referring now to FIG. 1, a first example system 10 includes one or more in-store computers 12, one or more self-service computers 14, and a host computer 16.

[0013] In-store computer 12, self-service computer 14, and host computer 16 may be coupled together by a network. The network may be a proprietary network or a global communication network, such as the Internet.

[0014] The venue for in-store computer 12 and self-service computer 14 may be any venue suited to displaying a menu. One example venue is a quick service restaurant, for example, a "fast food" restaurant in which the menu displays food items for selection by customers. However, other types of venues are also envisioned where self-service users make choices via menus.

[0015] Host computer 36 may be located and operated in a headquarters or other operational office where centralized menu decisions are made.

[0016] In-store computer 12 and self-service computer 14 each include a processor, memory, program and data storage, a display, and one or more user input devices. The display and user input device may be combined as a touch screen.

[0017] In-store computer 12 and self-service computer 14 may each execute an operating system such as a Microsoft operating system, which can display screen information within one or more windows.

[0018] In-store computer 12 and self-service computer 14 additionally include components and peripherals necessary to accomplish the purpose for the environment in which they are located. For example, self-service computer 14 may additionally include, but not be limited to, any of the following: one or more payment peripherals and a receipt printer. Example payment peripherals include a card reader, a currency and/or coin accepter, and a currency and/or coin dispenser.

[0019] In-store computer 12 executes menu modification application 20, which receives menu data 22 from host computer 16. Menu data 22 may contain selections that don't apply to a particular store location. Menu modification application 20 modifies menu data 22 to produce modified menu data 24. Example modifications to menu data 22 include classifying menu items in menu data 22 as available for sale, temporarily unavailable for sale, or permanently inactive or unavailable for sale in response to user selection. Other types of modifications are also envisioned.

[0020] Menu modification application 20 may include roles and permissions that control modification of menu data 22. For example, permission may be required for a user to change an item from currently unavailable to available, or vice versa.

[0021] Menu modification application 20 may facilitate reclassifying menu items in modified menu data 22. For example, menu modification application 20 may record a previously unavailable item as now available for sale in response to user selection.

[0022] Menu modification application 20 may also recognize rules or instructions from host computer 16 in menu data 22. For example, the operational office may include instructions specifying that temporarily unavailable items be automatically made available again at the start of the next business day.

[0023] Menu modification application 20 may additionally store modifications to menu data 22 in modification log 26 and automatically compare subsequent menu data 22 to the information in menu modification log 26 to avoid subsequent menu data 22 overwriting earlier modified menu data 24. Menu modification application 20 thus ignores portions of subsequent menu data 22 if they correspond to modifications that have previously been made.

[0024] Self-service computer 14 executes self-service application 28, which displays modified menu data 24,